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RELEASED IN PART
 B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

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	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	FMP-00	SNIS-00
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 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8324
 INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 005710

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, NEA/NGA, AND EUR/CEN; LONDON FOR POL/TUELLER;
CENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/7/07
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, KISL, AF, IR
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: OBSERVERS REPORT UPTICK IN SUPPORT FOR
ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS BY IRAN

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 5212; (B) ISLAMABAD 2001

(U) CLASSIFIED BY DAN MOZENA, ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASON:
1.5 (C) (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: OBSERVERS REPORT AN UPTICK IN IRANIAN MILITARY
AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS IN THE PAST
SEVERAL WEEKS. [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] BELIEVE IRAN'S ACTIONS ARE A DEFENSIVE REACTION TO THE
TALIBAN'S EFFORTS TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE NORTH. PAKISTANI
INTERLOCUTORS DISAGREE, SEEING IRANIAN ACTIVITIES AS INHERENTLY
AGGRESSIVE. OBSERVERS AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT IRAN'S ACTIVITIES ARE
MOTIVATED IN PART BY ANTI-U.S. VIEWS, AND THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY
GUARDS AND INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES ARE PLAYING KEY ROLES IN SETTING
POLICY. END SUMMARY.

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UPTICK IN MILITARY SUPPORT

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2. (C) OBSERVERS OF THE AFGHAN SCENE HAVE NOTICED AN UPTICK IN IRANIAN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS IN THE NORTH SINCE THE OUSTER OF GENERAL DOSTAM, THE FORMER NATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (NIMA) LEADER, IN LATE MAY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF ON JULY 5 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE IRANIANS HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF FLIGHTS FLYING BETWEEN IRANIAN AND AFGHAN POINTS IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. WHILE NOTING THAT SOME OF THESE FLIGHTS PROBABLY ARE CARRYING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ITEMS, SUCH AS FOOD, [REDACTED] MOST OF THE FLIGHTS ARE TRANSPORTING MILITARY ITEMS, INCLUDING SMALL ARMS, AMMUNITION, AND EXPLOSIVES. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH POLOFF, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HAVE OBSERVED VARIOUS IRANIAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT PARKED AT MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMBIYAN AIRPORTS IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. [REDACTED]

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IRANIANS ON THE GROUND

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3. (C) OBSERVERS ADD THAT THEY BELIEVE IRAN HAS INCREASED THE NUMBER OF "DIPLOMATS" IT HAS STATIONED AT ITS MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMBIYAN CONSULATES. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT THERE WERE OVER FIFTY IRANIANS WORKING AT THE CONSULATE. IN PREVIOUS TRIPS, HE HAD HEARD THAT THERE WERE ONLY TWENTY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT IN A MID-JUNE VISIT TO BAMBIYAN HE HEARD THAT THERE WERE MANY IRANIANS LIVING IN THE TOWN, SOME OF WHOM WERE INVOLVED IN HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS MEDICINE AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION. HE HEARD, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WERE OVER TWENTY IRANIANS WORKING IN THE CONSULATE. [REDACTED] SAID HE WAS TOLD BY [REDACTED] THAT SOME OF THESE IRANIANS ARE

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REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS.

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A "REDOUBLING" OF EFFORTS

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4. (C) POLOFF ASKED [REDACTED] WHAT HE THINKS
 THESE VARIOUS REPORTS MIGHT MEAN. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] COMMENTED THAT IRANIAN DIPLOMATS IN
 ISLAMABAD HAVE TOLD HIM IN RECENT MEETINGS THAT IRAN IS
 "REDOUBLING" ITS EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN. ASKED WHAT THAT MEANT, HE
 REPLIED THAT IRAN HAD MADE A DECISION TO INCREASE ITS SUPPORT TO
 THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS TO BUTTRESS THEM AGAINST FUTURE ATTACKS
 FROM THE TALIBAN. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

5. (C) ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, [REDACTED] OBSERVED, IRAN CONTINUES ITS EFFORTS TO CONVINCE THE FACTIONS TO FORM A NEW "GOVERNMENT" TO COUNTER THE TALIBAN "GOVERNMENT" IN KABUL. THE POINT MAN FOR THESE EFFORTS IS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BORUJERDI, WHO HAS REPORTEDLY VISITED MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMBIYAN SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS. FOREIGN MINISTER VELAYATI HAS ALSO MET WITH A NUMBER OF ANTI-TALIBAN LEADERS RECENTLY, INCLUDING HEZB-I-ISLAMI LEADER GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR AND FORMER PRESIDENT BURHANUDDIN RABBANI.

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IRANIAN CONDUCT SEEN AS DEFENSIVE BY SOME...

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6. (C) [REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED THE ENHANCED IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AS "DEFENSIVE" IN NATURE -- "THE IRANIANS WERE GIVEN A FRIGHT WHEN THE TALIBAN ENTERED MAZAR-I-SHARIF IN LATE MAY AND THOUGHT THEY WERE LOSING THEIR STAKE IN AFGHANISTAN. ALTHOUGH THE TALIBAN HAVE BEEN PUSHED BACK, IRAN IS INTENT THAT ITS ALLIES NOT BE PLACED IN A SIMILAR POSITION AGAIN." IN A JULY 4 CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF, [REDACTED] AGREED WITH THIS ANALYSIS, ASSERTING THAT "IRAN IS ANGERED BY PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN AND WILL NOT ALLOW ITS ALLIES TO BE DEFEATED WITHOUT A FIGHT."

[REDACTED]

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AGGRESSIVE BY OTHERS

7. (C)

[REDACTED] SAW IRANIAN BEHAVIOR IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT. [REDACTED]

SAID HE FELT THAT IRANIAN POLICY OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN ARE LONG-TERM AND BASICALLY INVOLVE ENHANCING IRANIAN INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN VIS-A-VIS PAKISTAN AND THE U.S. -- "WITH THE DEFEAT OF THE TALIBAN AT MAZAR-I-SHARIF, THE IRANIANS ARE REACTING TO A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY WHICH THEY FEEL WILL ALLOW IRAN TO BECOME

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DOMINANT IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN."

AGREE WITH [REDACTED] VIEWS, AND, [REDACTED]

EMBOFFS, [REDACTED] STRESSED WHAT THEY SEE AS IRAN'S AGGRESSIVE DESIGNS IN AFGHANISTAN. FOR EXAMPLE, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THAT IRAN WANTS "TO BUILD A LAND BRIDGE" FROM ITS TERRITORY THROUGH NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN TO CONNECT WITH TAJIKISTAN TO CREATE A "GREATER PERSIA."

IRANIAN ANTI-AMERICANISM

8. (C) WHILE OBSERVERS DISAGREE WHETHER IRAN'S BEHAVIOR IS DEFENSIVE OR AGGRESSIVE IN NATURE, THEY SEEM TO AGREE THAT ONE MOTIVATING FACTOR FOR IRAN IS ANTI-AMERICANISM. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT HE HAS ENCOUNTERED A VISCERAL ANTI-AMERICANISM AMONG HIS IRANIAN INTERLOCUTORS, WHO ACCUSE THE U.S. OF BEING IN LEAGUE WITH PAKISTAN TO SUPPORT THE TALIBAN AGAINST IRAN. A SPECIFIC SOURCE OF ANGER FOR IRAN, [REDACTED] IS THEIR BELIEF

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 ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS BY IRAN

THAT THE U.S. IS STRONGLY BACKING THE TALIBAN AS A WAY TO ENSURE
 THAT UNOCAL IS ABLE TO BUILD THE OIL AND GAS PIPELINES CONNECTING
 CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA THROUGH AFGHANISTAN -- "THEY (IRANIANS)
 APPEAR TO BELIEVE THE U.S. WANTS THE PIPELINES BUILT TO UNDERCUT
 IRAN AND ISOLATE IT FROM CENTRAL ASIA."

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 WHO MAKES IRANIAN POLICY?
 =====

9. (C) POLOFF ASKED OBSERVERS WHO THEY THOUGHT SETS POLICY ON
 AFGHANISTAN IN THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT. THE UNIVERSAL ANSWER WAS
 THAT IRAN'S SYSTEM OF FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IS SO OPAQUE
 THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL. HOWEVER, [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] BELIEVE THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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PLAYS A SECONDARY ROLE IN POLICY FORMULATION IN COMPARISON TO
IRAN'S OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCIES. IN ADDITION, THEY DOUBT
THAT NEWLY-ELECTED AND PUTATIVE MODERATE PRESIDENT KHATAMI HAS
EXERCISED MUCH INFLUENCE ON AFGHAN POLICY AS OF YET. [REDACTED]
AGREED [REDACTED] STATING THAT HE BELIEVES
THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY, AND THE
REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS, PLAY KEY ROLES IN POLICY FORMULATION AND
IMPLEMENTATION. HE ADDED THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ALSO PLAYS
A KEY ROLE, ESPECIALLY ALONG THE IRANIAN BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN.
(NOTE: IRAN CLOSED THE BORDER TO ALL TRAFFIC IN EARLY JUNE. IT
REPORTEDLY REMAINS CLOSED -- SEE REF A.) IRAN, HE ADDED, HAS
ESTABLISHED A FORWARD BASE IN MESHED FOR ALL MINISTRIES WORKING ON
AFGHAN ISSUES.

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COMMENT
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